

representing us at every level of the justice system. He was a determined, an experienced, and a knowledgeable attorney. His accidental and untimely death shall be regretted by all the people of California as well as those that he worked with. We mourn him, but we salute him as a lawyer who represented us at the highest level of performance. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

□ 1630

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

THE MEDICARE FRAUD PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2003, THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE CLARIFICATION ACT OF 2003, AND THE ENERGY AND SCIENCE RESEARCH INVESTMENT ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce three bills that address issues affecting our health care system, our workplace, and the future of science research in the United States.

Topping our agenda as we begin this first day of the 108th Congress are the serious challenges facing our Medicare system: enacting a prescription drug benefit for seniors and providing fair and adequate reimbursement for physicians, hospitals, and care facilities in my home State of Illinois and across the Nation.

So the first bill that I introduce today is one that will make it easier to provide this funding by cracking down on the waste, fraud, and abuse that drain more than \$12 billion a year from the Medicare system.

The Medicare Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Act of 2003 will put an end to that theft. It will strengthen the Medicare enrollment process, expand certain standards of participation, and reduce erroneous payments. Perhaps most importantly, it gives criminal investigators at the Department of Health and Human Services the Federal law enforcement tools to help them pursue and prosecute health care swindlers.

The time to modernize Medicare is not next week, not next month or next year; the time is now. But true reform will not be achieved without first protecting Medicare from fraud and scandalous exploitation.

The second bill I introduce today, the Family and Medical Leave Clarification Act of 2003, will make a good act work even better for our Nation's

workers and employers. What do I mean by that? Well, since its enactment in 1993, the Family and Medical Leave Act, or FMLA, has brought peace of mind and job security during critical times to thousands of workers and their families. That is a good thing. But along with this good thing has come the bad: conflict with existing workplace policies, misinterpretations, and misapplications of the law, intrusions into the privacy of employees, and other consequences that were never anticipated or intended by Congress. While none of us would say that FMLA is broken, all of us, employees and employers alike, must recognize that it should be fixed.

How will my bill fix the unintended and unwanted consequences of FMLA?

First, it clarifies what is now regarded as a confusing definition of a "serious health condition."

Second, it allows for employees to request leave time in blocks of at least 4 hours so that they have enough time to take care of their business without feeling rushed to return to the office. At the same time, it cuts down on the paperwork that employers must process and the intrusive questions they must ask employees before granting leave.

Third, it allows employers to require employees to choose whether to take unpaid leave under FMLA or a paid leave of absence under a collective bargaining agreement. It provides an incentive for employers who offer sick leave to continue to do so while providing a disincentive for those who are considering termination of such employee friendly plans.

The FMLA Clarification Act is a reasonable measure and fair response to many of the concerns raised by workers and employers around the country. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Last but not least, I introduce today the Energy and Science Research Investment Act, which recognizes the urgent need to finance and manage well our Nation's basic research initiatives.

Over the past 5 years, Federal funding for medical research has nearly doubled, yet funding for research in the physical sciences has remained stagnant at 1990 levels.

The Energy and Science Research Investment Act will provide additional resources to the Department of Energy's Office of Science and make organizational changes that will enhance the accountability and oversight of energy research and science programs at the DOE.

Mr. Speaker, I thank those who have signed on as original cosponsors of these bills, and I urge others to join us in becoming cosponsors of these three key measures.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks).

THREAT REDUCTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I introduced the Threat Reduction Implementation Act of 2003, granting the President permanent waiver authority over Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction certification requirements to prevent dangerous delays in this critical defense program. Unnecessary restrictions and delays in funding Nunn-Lugar put Americans at risk of potential attacks using smuggled Russian chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons technology or material.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 fundamentally changed the way we think of national security and protecting the homeland. Unlike adversaries of the past, our enemies today not only utilize untraditional weapons in their war of terror, but also are seeking access to new and even more destructive weapons, such as chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

Twelve years ago, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program was born out of the necessity to ensure that the nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union would not fall into the wrong hands as the Soviet empire was coming apart. While much has been done to dismantle these weapons, continuing economic and social weaknesses in Russia, coupled with an eroding early warning system, poorly secured Russian weapons materials, and poorly paid Russian weapons scientists and security personnel, increase the threat of mass destruction on an unprecedented scale.

Unfortunately, every year opponents of the CTR program wage a campaign to slow down or even block funds for the continuation of U.S. efforts in Russia to monitor and reduce weapons-usable nuclear material and other weapons of mass destruction. While accountability and oversight are necessary to make sure that Nunn-Lugar funds are serving their intended purpose, recurrent delays owing to outdated certification requirements have proven detrimental to our ability to protect the homeland.

During the fiscal year 2003 Defense authorization and appropriation debates, the administration requested permanent waiver authority over many certification requirements in order to permit elements of the program to go forward. After a drawn out debate, conferees ended up granting a 3-year waiver on the Nunn-Lugar certification requirements and a 1-year waiver for the construction of a chemical weapons construction facility in Shchuchye, Russia. Avoiding lengthy and unnecessary delays in the Nunn-Lugar program

and specifically with the chemical weapons elimination project in Russia, it is in the strong national interest of the United States and justifies granting the President permanent waiver authority. With the weapons at Shchuchye reportedly able to kill the world's population some 20 times over, the continued, insecure existence of these highly dangerous and portable weapons is a direct threat to the American people.

Securing Russia's arsenal is a massive challenge, but not an impossible one. While the cost of a terrorist attack on the United States involving Russian expertise or smuggled Russian nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon materials are potentially staggering, funding for the simple measures that can prevent these attacks is both sensible and urgent. Robust, uninterrupted funding of this very critical program would accelerate the progress of reducing these attacks on the United States and help the Russian Federation secure its weapons stockpile.

Although the President has broad authority to use force in the war on terrorism, ironically he is significantly constrained in using cooperative means to destroy these weapons of mass destruction. Granting the President permanent waiver authority over Nunn-Lugar certification requirements will avoid dangerous delays in this critical defense program and prevent Russia's weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT), the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN), and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK), who joined me today as original cosponsors of this bill. I would like to also thank Senator RICHARD LUGAR and former Senator Sam Nunn for their foresight and leadership on this issue. I look forward to working with my colleagues during this Congress on this very important homeland security issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HISTORIC MOMENTS FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my colleagues join me in welcoming the 54 new Mem-

bers to this august body and the returning Members who are charged with helping to chart the course for these new Members, knowing that they have a very complex and awesome responsibility. But, Mr. Speaker, today has been an historic day for us. We have seen, for the first time ever a woman, a Democratic woman, whose name was put in nomination for the Speakership of the U.S. House of Representatives, and another woman who became the chairwoman of the congressional Republican Conference. Those are historic moments for us, Mr. Speaker, and as the Democratic chair of the Women's Caucus, I am very much envious of this momentous occasion that has brought these two women front and center to leadership roles.

So as we convene this 108th Congress, we should also pause to look at the other historic notes that were taken today in this esteemed body, as we convened with two sibling pairs of Members that have come to this House. The SANCHEZ sisters from California and the DIAZ-BALART brothers from Florida will serve simultaneously as teams in this Congress, representing diverse districts on opposite coasts of this great country. My esteemed colleagues, with their formidable backgrounds, are all accomplished in their own rights, coming from immigrant families and immigrant backgrounds who have truly lived the American dream with hard work, as productive members of society, giving back and serving the people of their communities. They have now been elected to the U.S. Congress.

The senior sister, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ), has an MBA from American University and is an accomplished businesswoman, assisting municipalities and private companies in strategic planning and capital acquisition. The State of California selected her to independently review the financial status of Orange County's first toll road to save about \$300 million in financing costs. The junior sister, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LINDA SANCHEZ), with her law degree from UCLA, was a civil rights lawyer and labor activist heading up the Orange County AFL-CIO.

The senior brother, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), has a law degree from Cleveland, Ohio's Case Western Reserve University, which he used to provide free legal service to the poor. The junior brother, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART), served in the Florida State Legislature for 14 years before being elected to serve in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, let us welcome all of these outstanding freshman Members, these pairs of siblings who have come to serve their respective districts, but who have made history, along with the two outstanding women, and may we all embrace them as they take their rightful roles. I know that all of us salute the Latino community, because

they are proud of today's historic events, as well as all Americans are proud of these pairs of siblings.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, happy New Year, and congratulations to all of my colleagues for the beginning of the 108th Congress.

I believe that we have an opportunity as we serve in the United States Congress to make things better and, therefore, I would like to speak this afternoon on the attempt to honor some who I believe have made this world a better place. So today I will be filing a resolution to express the sense of Congress for a commemorative postage stamp in honor of the late George Thomas "Mickey" Leland, one of our colleagues who fought so valiantly to avoid hunger in this world. As I stand here, we are recognizing the emerging famine in Ethiopia, which was one of the reasons that Congressman Leland was in Ethiopia in 1989, to be able to thwart the enormous hunger that that Nation was facing. It will be our challenge in this Congress to honor him, but to as well take up the cause that he so valiantly attempted in his work to avoid or to stamp out hunger in the world.

□ 1645

I hope, as we look at the funding and the issues before us, we will not forget that we are in fact our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

In addition, I am filing today a resolution to name the Department of Veterans Affairs in Houston Hospital as the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Michael E. DeBakey, a famous and renowned heart surgeon, was also a renowned, valiant fighter for America in World War II. So we believe that this would be an appropriate honoring of such an outstanding leader.

I also intend to file today a bill that will emphasize more mental health services for children and to provide more support for our community mental health centers around the Nation. We lost a valiant soldier on behalf of the mental health needs of this Nation last year, our dear friend, former Senator Paul Wellstone. In his honor I believe that we should continue to fight for the equality of health care as it relates to mental health services, and particularly I believe that we should advocate for the children of this land to have access to mental health services.

Over the last couple of years, as the co-Chair and Chair of the Congressional Children's Caucus, my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), and myself have tried to focus on the needs of children in America. It has been appalling to